UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1997/686
4 September 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE SITUATION IN TAJIKISTAN

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1113 (1997) of 12 June 1997, by which the Council requested me to keep it informed of developments in the country, and to present to it detailed recommendations on the role of the United Nations in support of the implementation of the inter-Tajik agreements and the adjustment of the mandate and strength of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT). It brings up to date the record of developments in Tajikistan and of UNMOT, as well as the activities of my Special Representative for Tajikistan, since my report of 30 May 1997 (S/1997/415).

II. CONCLUSION OF GENERAL PEACE AGREEMENT

2. On 27 June 1997, President Emomali Rakhmonov, Sayed Abdullo Nuri, leader of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) and Mr. Gerd Merrem, my Special Representative for Tajikistan, signed in Moscow the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan and the Moscow Declaration. President Rakhmonov and Mr. Nuri also signed a Protocol of Mutual Understanding, which was witnessed by Mr. Merrem, Foreign Minister Yevgeny M. Primakov of the Russian Federation and Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The signing ceremony was attended by President Boris N. Yeltsin of the Russian Federation, foreign ministers of the observer countries, Secretary-General Azeddine Laraki of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and senior officials of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Mr. Bernard Miyet, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, attended on my behalf, together with Mr. Merrem. The text of the agreements was circulated under cover of a letter, dated 1 July 1997, from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation (A/52/219-S/1997/510).

3. While in Moscow, the Secretary-General of OIC signed the Protocol on Guarantees of the Implementation of the General Agreement, which had been agreed in Tehran on 28 May. The Government of Uzbekistan acceded to the Protocol in New York on 26 August. The Contact Group created by this Protocol convened in Dushanbe on 16 July and has met several times since then. It comprises the

representatives of the guarantor States (Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) and includes also the Secretary-General's Special Representative, the head of the OSCE mission in Tajikistan and a representative of OIC. The Secretary-General's Special Representative acts as coordinator of the Contact Group and provides necessary support.

4. In accordance with the Protocol of Mutual Understanding between the President of Tajikistan and the UTO leader, the first meeting of the Commission on National Reconciliation took place in Moscow under the chairmanship of Mr. Nuri from 7 to 11 July 1997. The Commission adopted an Act on Mutual Forgiveness, which was signed by President Rakhmonov on 14 July, and prepared a draft Act on Amnesty, which was adopted by the Majlisi Oli (Parliament) on 1 August 1997. This was not only a step forward in the process of national reconciliation but also removed a potential obstacle to the return of the UTO members of the Commission to Tajikistan. Based on the same Protocol, the exchange of 49 captured government soldiers and 48 detained UTO supporters took place on 18 to 20 July 1997. Both Tajik sides confirmed at the highest level their intention to finalize the practical preparations for the Commission to begin its work inside the country as soon as possible. These preparations have focused mainly on the stationing of the 460 UTO fighters in Dushanbe. This was delayed, owing to disagreement over the site and deployment of the UTO unit as well as the security situation in the country in mid-August. On 2 September, both sides informed Mr. Merrem that this difficulty had been overcome in the course of a telephone conversation between President Rakhmonov and Mr. Nuri, and that the latter would arrive in Dushanbe, together with his colleagues, in time for the commemoration of Tajikistan's independence day, which is on 9 September.

III. DEVELOPMENTS IN TAJIKISTAN AND ACTIVITIES OF THE MISSION

5. The situation in Tajikistan continued to be volatile. Several unclaimed acts of violence took place in Dushanbe and other parts of the country. On 6 June, a bomb exploded in Khorog, the administrative capital of Gorno-Badakhshan, killing two UTO members. An officer of the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was killed and a warrant officer was wounded in Dushanbe on 17 June. A bomb was detonated on 26 July near the presidential palace in Dushanbe, injuring several persons.

6. In the second week of June, tensions mounted in Khatlon province south of Dushanbe when the commander of the Government's Rapid Reaction Brigade, Colonel Mahmud Khudoiberdiev, asserted control from his base in Kurgan-Tube over parts of Khatlon province and Hissar, Shakhrinau and Tursunzade. Subsequently, he took control of the Fahrabad pass, 25 kilometres south of Dushanbe. Efforts to find a negotiated solution were not successful, and in the second week of August fighting broke out between the Rapid Reaction Brigade and the Presidential Guard. On 9 August, there was heavy fighting in the northern outskirts of Dushanbe between the Ministry of Interior's Special Forces Brigade and forces of Mr. Yakub Salimov, the Customs chief, for whom Colonel Khudoiberdiev declared his support. The Customs chief's forces retreated towards the Hissar valley and, on 11 August, the Presidential Guard took Tursunzade, Hissar and Shakhrinau. As a result of contacts between

Colonel Khudoiberdiev and President Rakhmonov facilitated by the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of CIS, an agreement was reached whereby Colonel Khudoiberdiev was relieved of his post by a presidential decree and both sides were to withdraw their forces. Despite the agreement, troops of the Presidential Guard and the Ministry of Interior continued to press their attack, entering Kurgan-Tube and pushing Colonel Khudoiberdiev towards Kabodion and Shaartuz, near the Uzbek border. As of this writing, Khatlon province is under the control of the Ministry of Interior and the Presidential Guard. In the wake of the fighting, UNMOT received reports of local inhabitants being harassed by these troops. Colonel Khudoiberdiev's whereabouts are unknown.

7. On 1 August, two sons of Mr. Amanullo Nematzoda, Mufti of Tajikistan, were kidnapped from their home near Dushanbe by armed supporters of the Sodirov brothers. In exchange for the two sons, the group demanded the release of Bakhrom Sodirov, under government custody, or US$ 100,000. On 22 August, the Supreme Court of Tajikistan confirmed that it had received an official proposal from the group to exchange the two sons for Bakhrom. His brother Rizvon remains at large. On 27 August, Mr. Nematzoda was himself taken by the same group, reportedly as he attempted to secure the release of his sons. On 1 September, government forces launched an operation against the Sodirov group. The next day, Mr. Nematzoda was released but not his two sons. At the time of reporting, the situation was still ongoing.

8. The ceasefire between the Tajik Government and the United Tajik Opposition continued to hold until 19 August, when fighting broke out between forces loyal to opposition field commanders in the Kofarnikhon and Teppei Samarkandi areas and Ministry of Interior troops, following the arrest on criminal charges of three members of the opposition group by the local police. The opposition took three policemen hostage, demanding an exchange. The Joint Commission, together with UNMOT, negotiated the release of those held. At the same time, opposition fighters in neighbouring Turkobad took four civilians hostage, demanding the return of a vehicle that had been confiscated by the police. The same Joint Commission/UNMOT team negotiated their release. However, the situation in Turkobad continued to be tense and, on 27 August, five UTO fighters were killed in a clash with the police. Mr. Davlat Usmon, UTO Chief of Staff, together with members of the Joint Commission, went to the area in order to establish the facts and defuse tension. However, on 29 August, intense fighting took place between UTO members and Ministry of Defence troops about 9 kilometres east of Dushanbe. UTO took nine prisoners, of whom five were released the next day.

9. In other developments, the Government has reported the large-scale theft of livestock, which are alleged to have been taken to UTO strongholds in the Tavildara sector. A commission has been formed, comprising representatives of the Government, UTO, UNMOT and the farms concerned, to investigate the thefts.

10. On 23 August, the Mission's helicopter developed engine trouble en route from Childara to Dushanbe and had to make an emergency landing at Komsomolabad. On inspection two bullet holes were discovered in the aircraft. The helicopter carried Mr. Amirkul Azimov, Secretary of the National Security Council, Mr. Usmon, a member of the Commission on National Reconciliation from the Government side, an official from the President's office, a CIS liaison officer, the Mission's Deputy Chief Military Observer and another military observer, all

of whom were travelling in connection with arrangements to transport the initial 200 of the 460 UTO fighters to be stationed in Dushanbe. No one has claimed responsibility for the shooting.

11. In the Garm and Tavildara areas, differences arose with UTO over the Mission's freedom of movement. On 18 August, UNMOT was informed in writing by the UTO field commander in Garm that, in future, the Mission's helicopter would only be allowed to fly over the area if an opposition representative was on board. In addition, UNMOT would not be allowed to patrol certain areas by road. The UTO field commander in Tavildara informed UNMOT of similar restrictions in his area of responsibility. UNMOT met with the field commander in Garm on 22 August to protest these restrictions. The commander, while expressing support for the Mission's activities, continued to insist that certain areas would remain out of bounds for United Nations personnel. UNMOT has protested to Mr. Nuri and is pursuing the matter.

12. UNMOT continued to lend assistance to the Joint Commission established under the 1994 ceasefire agreement, and to the delegations led by Messrs. Azimov and Usmon. Rotation of military observers was resumed on 4 June and UNMOT was brought up to full strength.

13. At present, UNMOT comprises 44 military observers from Austria (5), Bangladesh (7), Bulgaria (6), Denmark (4), Jordan (5), Poland (3), Switzerland (5), Ukraine (3) and Uruguay (6), and 63 civilian personnel, of whom 23 are internationally recruited. In addition to its headquarters in Dushanbe, UNMOT maintained its team site in Khujand and re-established teams in Khorog, Kalaikhum, Garm and Kurgan-Tube. Mr. Merrem continued as my Special Representative and Head of Mission. Brigadier-General Boleslaw Izydorczyk (Poland) continued as Chief Military Observer.

IV. HUMANITARIAN AND REHABILITATION ACTIVITIES

14. The return of United Nations personnel in early May permitted the resumption of humanitarian assistance in the country. However, the fighting among government forces in August forced a temporary evacuation of staff from the Khatlon area and a reduction of activities by United Nations agencies. The current donor alert, which was extended through August 1997, resulted in only half of the requested US$ 22 million, mostly against World Food Programme (WFP) food aid requirements. An updated alert, outlining additional humanitarian requirements to sustain vulnerable groups during the winter months, is to be issued in September.

15. Other humanitarian organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and non-governmental organizations continued to play a key role in ensuring the continuation of relief and rehabilitation assistance programmes, especially during floods in May and June. WFP contributed daily rations for distribution to over 2,100 families identified by IFRC.

16. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) resumed voluntary repatriation of refugees from Afghanistan on 17 July. As at

28 August, more than 3,000 persons were repatriated through Nizhniy-Pyanj. Preparations are also under way for the return of refugees through Ishkashim and Termez. UNHCR issued an appeal in early August totalling $9.7 million to cover the cost of the return and initial reintegration of some 25,000 refugees, mostly from northern Afghanistan, over the next 18 months. Some 2,000 internally displaced persons were airlifted from Khorog to Dushanbe by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and another 2,600 were returned from Dushanbe to Darvaz district and Sagirdasht with government assistance.

17. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has completed an evaluation of its programme in order to ensure that its activities support the peace process. The rehabilitation, reconstruction and development programme, which is financed by UNDP and executed by the United Nations Office for Project Services, will serve as one of the main vehicles for support to the reconciliation process.

V. UNITED NATIONS FUNCTIONS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTER-TAJIK AGREEMENTS

18. The signing of the General Agreement and the subsequent convening of the Commission on National Reconciliation launched the period of transition, during which the refugees are to return; the UTO fighters are to be demobilized or reintegrated into the governmental structures; the armed forces, police and security apparatus are to be reformed; and the democratic processes in the country are to be improved, leading to elections and the formation of a new Government. The General Agreement and the separate protocols constitute a broad mandate for political change but do not themselves provide a detailed blueprint. It has been left to the Commission to work out the solutions to the many issues that will need to be addressed. As a consequence, the assistance expected from the international community in this process has been described largely in general terms, with some exceptions, notably in the protocol on military issues.

19. As far as UNMOT is concerned, the functions it would be required to perform during the transition period can be summarized as follows:

To use its best efforts to promote peace and national reconciliation and to assist in the implementation of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan and, to this end, to

- provide good offices and expert advice;
- cooperate with the Commission on National Reconciliation and its subcommissions, and with the Central Commission on Elections and the Holding of a Referendum;
- participate in the work of the Contact Group and serve as its coordinator;
- monitor the ceasefire;

- monitor the assembly of UTO fighters and their reintegration, disarmament and demobilization;

- provide initial assistance for the reintegration into the governmental power structures or demobilization of ex-combatants;

- coordinate United Nations assistance to Tajikistan during the transition period.

Concept of operations

20. The implementation of the General Agreement will involve a complex set of actors with distinct responsibilities but overlapping areas of concern. Close liaison, consultation and coordination will therefore be the key to the successful conclusion of this process.

Political issues

21. The Commission on National Reconciliation is the main organ through which the Tajik parties intend to implement the General Agreement. Composed in equal numbers of representatives of the Government and UTO, and chaired by the leader of UTO, Mr. Nuri, it is to oversee the implementation of the agreements in all their aspects and, among other things, propose new legislation, provide guidance for the disbandment, disarmament and reintegration of the UTO fighters and work on the reform of the power structures. UNMOT would be required to work closely with the Commission and its subcommissions. This would entail participating in its meetings and activities, providing information and advice and exercising good offices when the need arises.

22. UNMOT would continue to cooperate closely with OSCE, which has been requested to facilitate the implementation of the General Agreement in the areas related to the observance of human rights and the establishment of democratic political and legal institutions and processes. It is envisaged that UNMOT and the OSCE mission in Tajikistan will complement and support each other in these activities.

23. UNMOT would continue to maintain close contact with the guarantor States and serve as coordinator of the Contact Group.

Military issues

24. UNMOT would continue as before to maintain close liaison with the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of CIS, both in relation to their responsibilities relating to the return of UTO units from Afghanistan (see below) and their other responsibilities in the country. Liaison with the Russian border forces would also continue.

25. The assembly of armed UTO units in the agreed areas (in Vanj, Garm, Jirgatal, Komsomolabad, Kofarnikhon, Rushan, Tavildara, Tajikabad districts and the towns of Khorog and Magmurud), their registration and eventual reintegration into the national army/police, or their demobilization, is to take place in

three stages within six months, and the full merger of former UTO units with the governmental power structures is to be completed by 1 July 1998. The establishment of the assembly areas, the registration of the UTO personnel and the guarding of their weapons will be undertaken by the Tajik parties themselves. The UTO personnel will be assembled as organized military units and will be subordinated to the appropriate Tajik chain of command within one month of assembly. The responsibilities envisaged for UNMOT involve good offices, technical advice and monitoring. UNMOT would establish a team at each assembly area to carry out these functions.

26. In connection with the transfer of UTO units from Afghanistan, the military subcommission of the Commission on National Reconciliation and UNMOT are to travel to Afghanistan and draw up a register of weapons and ammunition. Subject to the agreement of the Afghan authorities, it is envisaged that this would take place on Afghan territory at the two agreed crossing points, Ishkashim and Nizhniy Pyanj. After entering Tajik territory, the UTO units and their arms and ammunition are to be escorted to the assembly areas by the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of CIS, monitored by UNMOT. United Nations military observers would be stationed at the crossing points to perform these functions. Additional observers would monitor movement to the assembly areas.

27. Maintaining the good order and discipline of the UTO personnel during the period of assembly and until their assignment to a regular army or police unit, or their demobilization, as the case may be, will be a key element in the implementation of the General Agreement and the maintenance of the ceasefire during the delicate initial period of the transition process. An important factor in this will be that these personnel are adequately supplied with food, fuel and other necessities. Tajikistan is already dependent on outside assistance for meeting its most basic needs, and cannot assure that the requirements for the assembly areas will be met. At the same time, many donors have regulations that exclude assistance to military forces. Therefore, start-up funds would be included in the cost estimates for UNMOT so that it can assist with supplies for the first two to three months. The assessed budget would be reduced to the extent that voluntary contributions are made available.

28. It will be necessary to continue efforts to maintain a ceasefire in the country. UNMOT would therefore continue to discharge its current functions in this regard, deploy as necessary and carry out patrols and investigations, with a view to defusing tensions and containing conflicts that may arise. United Nations military observers would be stationed, as required, in locations other than the assembly areas, and observers would also be held in readiness in Dushanbe to go to areas of conflict together with representatives of the Tajik parties. It should be noted that the Joint Commission, established in accordance with the 1994 ceasefire agreement, will continue as a subsidiary organ of the Commission on National Reconciliation.

Refugees

29. The protocol on refugees established a timetable of 12 to 18 months (from January 1997) for the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their places of residence and for the reactivation of the Joint Commission on

Refugees first established in April 1994. UNHCR will continue to carry out its responsibilities in this respect.

International assistance

30. On the day of the signing of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan, President Rakhmonov and UTO leader Nuri addressed a letter to me (S/1997/508), in which they expressed their gratitude for the help of the Organization during all stages of the negotiating process and requested the Organization's further assistance in implementing the inter-Tajik agreements. In particular, they requested my assistance in organizing a meeting of potential donors. I have asked Mr. Merrem to take overall charge of the preparations for this meeting.

31. The focus of the donors' meeting will be on activities directly related to the implementation of the agreements, and in particular its critical first stages. This involves relief, assistance and rehabilitation programmes for returning refugees and demobilized fighters, the design and provision of vocational training programmes for demobilized fighters and government soldiers returning to work, and support and technical assistance to the Commission on National Reconciliation and government agencies. Such programmes would aim to consolidate the gains made during the negotiating process as well as to lay the foundations for the rehabilitation, development and democratization of Tajikistan. Under Mr. Merrem's leadership, United Nations agencies, bilateral agencies and non-governmental organizations have prepared a draft document addressing the specific support requirements for the peace process. It is hoped that the parties will have made sufficient progress in their preparations for the implementation of the agreements to warrant the convening of potential donors in mid-October.

32. In order to ensure unity of purpose and effort, and in accordance with my reform plan (see A/51/950, para. 119), I have given my Special Representative authority during the transition period over all United Nations entities in Tajikistan. To assist him in discharging this responsibility, I intend to appoint the United Nations Resident Coordinator as his Deputy. At United Nations Headquarters, a Task Force on Tajikistan has been established, in which all relevant departments and agencies are represented, to establish priorities for peace-building and to ensure coordination.

Timetable

33. The General Agreement does not contain a formal timetable for all the steps to be taken during the transition period. The statute of the Commission on National Reconciliation stipulates that it is a temporary body and is to cease its activity after the convening of the new Parliament and the formation of its leadership structures. It is anticipated that UNMOT would be required to function until that takes place. During the negotiations, the deadline of July 1998 in the protocol on military issues was taken as the target date for the completion of the transition as a whole.

Strengthening of UNMOT

34. To carry out its expanded tasks, UNMOT would need to be strengthened significantly. In view of the responsibilities of UNMOT for the Commission on National Reconciliation and the Contact Group, the Mission's civil affairs component would need to be increased and additional expertise added in the areas of public law (including human rights), police, electoral affairs and coordination of international assistance for the implementation of the General Agreement. UNMOT should also have an effective public information capacity to assist in keeping the Tajik population, as well as the international community, informed of relevant developments during this critical period.

35. The military component of UNMOT would be increased from its present authorized strength of 45 to 120 military observers. The observers would be organized in small teams to be deployed at the 10 assembly areas, the two crossing points and certain regional centres, as well as the headquarters in Dushanbe. The number takes into account that the crossing points are to be closed after two months. It is anticipated that the number of military observers could be reduced once the merger of former UTO units with the governmental power structures is under way.

36. The administrative component of UNMOT would be strengthened to support the larger Mission, as would its communications, road and air transport and other facilities, bearing in mind the mountainous terrain and the bad state of repair of the roads, many of which are cut off as a result of damage or will be impassable for several months in winter. A cost estimate for the enlarged operation will be circulated shortly as an addendum to the present report.

Security

37. In my report of 30 May 1997 (S/1997/415) I referred to a number of open questions, the most important of which was security. This remains a serious concern, as demonstrated by the events described in chapter III of the present report. The situation varies between the regions of the country. The area that is currently considered to pose the greatest risk extends from Dushanbe to Komsomolabad, through which runs the Mission's main road and air route for the movement and supply of the teams to be stationed in the Karategin valley and in the Tavildara sector. Several groups, which do not appear to be fully controlled by either the Government or UTO, operate in the area. The two hostage incidents in December 1996 and February 1997, which involved United Nations personnel, and the ongoing incident involving the Mufti took place in this area, as did the recent clashes between UTO groups and the police.

38. In my previous report I raised the possibility of the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of CIS assuming responsibility for the protection of United Nations personnel, provided all the parties agree. So far, this condition has not been met. Alternatively, I have studied the possibility of deploying a United Nations infantry battalion. However, to be effective such a unit would require the agreement and cooperation of the parties; this has not been forthcoming. In the circumstances, I have explored with the parties the possibility that they themselves might jointly provide security for United

Nations personnel with a combined force drawn from the Tajik army and the unit of 460 UTO fighters to be stationed in Dushanbe. This would be at the same time a confidence-building measure and a first step towards the reintegration of UTO fighters into the national army. The parties have not yet responded formally to this proposal.

VI. OBSERVATIONS

39. It is a cause for great satisfaction that the inter-Tajik negotiations, which were conducted under United Nations auspices since 1994, have been successfully concluded with the signing of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord. Long and often arduous as the process has been, the greater challenges are still ahead. Strong forces in Tajikistan are sceptical about the peace process. Some are concerned about the implications for them of the transformation of political life that it is to bring about. Others fear that the process might stop short of such a transformation and result in no more than a redivision of power between the contracting parties, to the detriment of others. It will be up to the Government of Tajikistan and UTO to fill the General Agreement with life, to bring all segments of society into the process of reconciliation and, together with them, to reform and strengthen the country's institutions so that they will withstand the stresses and strains to be expected after years of turbulence and upheaval. In the meantime, the situation in the country remains fluid, and the recent hostilities within the government camp and between government forces and certain UTO groups indicate how much is yet to be achieved.

40. The primary responsibility for the negotiations rested with the Tajik parties, and to them must also go the credit for the successful outcome. However, there is no doubt that the negotiations could not have been brought to this conclusion without the support of the observer States and international organizations, which helped to overcome frequent obstacles and setbacks. Recognizing this, the Tajik parties have agreed that close international involvement must be an integral part of the implementation process as well; they have included requests to this effect in the General Agreement. Its implementation will indeed require continuing strong international support and I believe that the international community should respond positively to these requests.

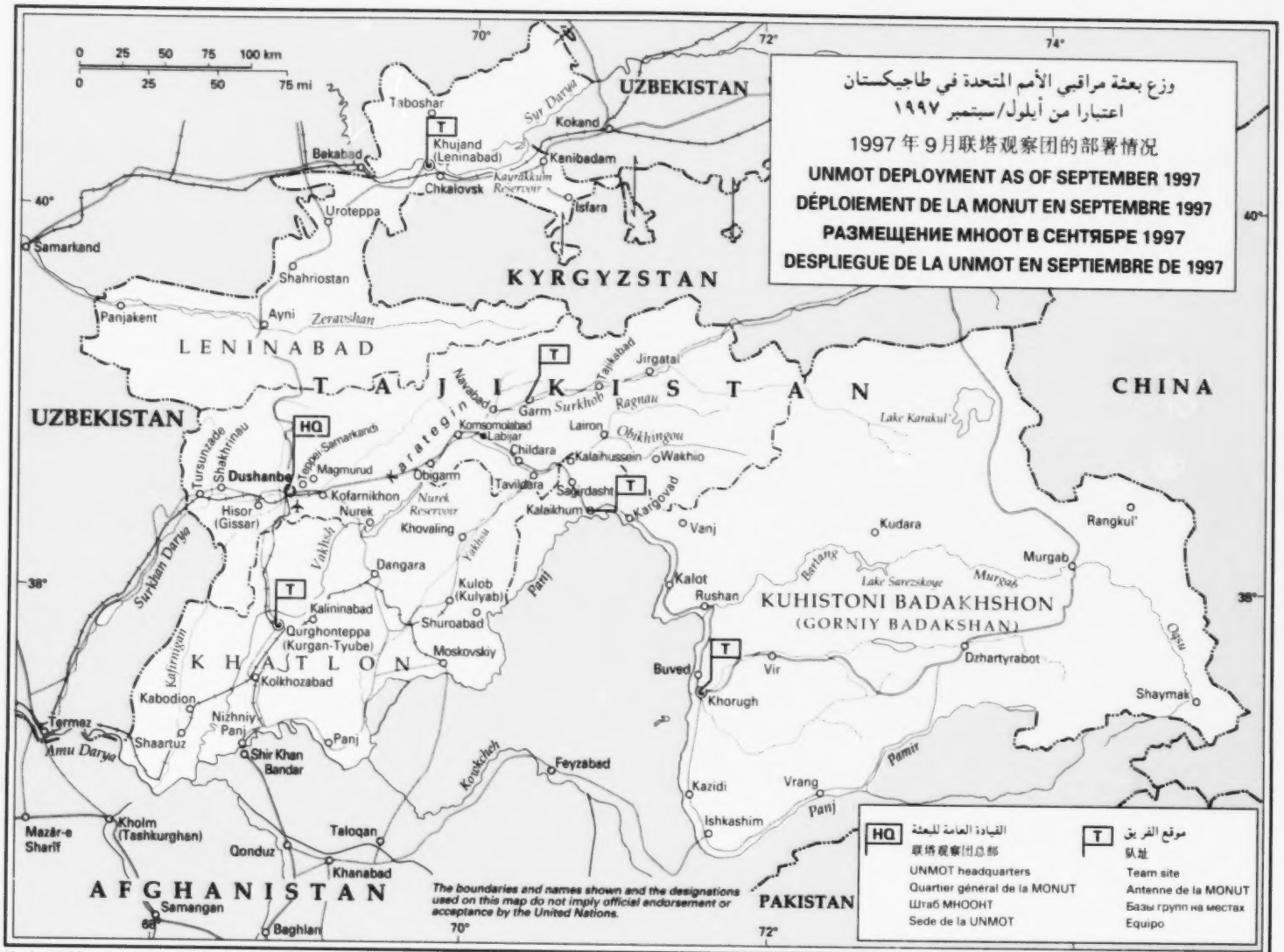
41. In the light of these considerations, I recommend that the Security Council expand the mandate of UNMOT to include the functions outlined in paragraph 19 of the present report and that it authorize the strengthening of the Mission as described in paragraphs 34 to 36. I also recommend that the new mandate be authorized for an initial period of six months.

42. The Tajik parties are aware that UNMOT will not be maintained indefinitely, and this is reflected in the target they have informally set themselves, that is, to complete the transition within one year. This is an ambitious goal, given the magnitude of the task and the conditions prevailing in the country, which have once again deteriorated in recent weeks. Delays have already occurred, and it is to be hoped that the conditions will now be created for the Commission on National Reconciliation to begin discharging its responsibilities

within the next few days. This would have a positive effect on the overall situation in the country and prevent a further loss of momentum.

43. For the same reasons, it would be important for UNMOT to carry out without delay all the additional tasks expected of it. However, the extent to which UNMOT will actually be able to do so will be contingent on measures being taken to ensure that its personnel can perform their duties unhindered and that they will be reasonably safe. So far, this is not assured, especially in the central area around the capital and east of it, thus severely circumscribing the Mission's ability to discharge its responsibilities for the maintenance of the ceasefire and the implementation of the protocol on military issues. I intend to keep this matter under close review and to delay the build-up of the Mission, if necessary, until an adequate solution to this problem has been found. I shall keep the Security Council informed of developments in this regard and seek its guidance, as appropriate.

44. In concluding the present report, I should like to pay a warm tribute to Mr. Merrem, my Special Representative, for his outstanding contribution and leadership, to Brigadier-General Izydorczyk, the Chief Military Observer, and to the men and women serving with UNMOT, for the exemplary manner in which they have performed their difficult and often dangerous duties. I also take this opportunity to acknowledge with appreciation the cooperation and support given my Special Representative by the personnel of the United Nations agencies and programmes operating in Tajikistan.



Map No. 3887 Rev. 12 UNITED NATIONS
September 1997

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